

Bella Stiefel Medal



Lieutenant Edward V. Wetzel
Ladder Co. 231

Fire at 712 Stone Avenue, Brooklyn. Box 1693, 7:20 P.M.,
November 4, 1965. 3-Story NFP Multiple Dwelling.

Upon arrival of Engine Co. 231, fire had complete possession of the front portion of the top floor. The top floor hallway was filled with heavy smoke and searing heat. Some of the fleeing occupants told firemen that children were trapped on the top floor. Ordering his unit to stretch a line up the interior stairs of the building, Lieutenant Wetzel, in advance of his men, ran up the stairs to the fire apartment. Fire had already engulfed the living room, private hall, and kitchen of the apartment. Getting on his knees, Lieutenant Wetzel crawled into the fire apartment under the dense smoke and heat without benefit or protection of a mask or charged hose lines. He crawled through the rooms, searching as he advanced, until he came to a bedroom.

Entering this room he searched gropingly for the beds. On one bed he discovered the still and unconscious forms of two children. Quickly picking up the limp bodies, he shielded them from the flames with his own body and crawled back through the flaming apartment toward the hall. At a point of near collapse, Lieutenant Wetzel finally achieved the public hall and assistance. He thereupon turned over the children to other firemen who rendered first aid and resuscitation to the children as they removed them to safety.

The two little children undoubtedly owe their lives to the prompt and courageous actions of Lieutenant Wetzel. His act of personal bravery and unselfish devotion to duty was in keeping with the best Fire Department traditions.

BELLA STIEFEL MEDAL

All of Mrs. Stiefel's ninety years were spent in Manhattan where she came to admire the bravery displayed by firemen under dangerous conditions. Her will provided for the award of this medal which was presented for the first time in 1947.

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